

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3403

June 17, 2004

James Little
Administrator
Farm Services Agency
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Jim:

As you probably know, divergent weather conditions are currently causing extreme hardship for producers in major parts of North Dakota. Weather patterns have conspired to cause severe drought in the southwestern part of the state, while excess moisture has resulted in a significant problem with prevented planting in northern regions.

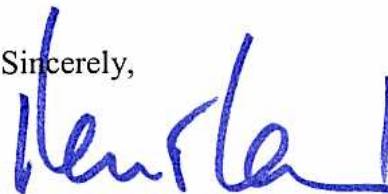
The extremes in moisture levels are not insignificant. Nine southwestern North Dakota counties have already submitted applications demonstrating moisture totals 40% below normal. I also understand that several northern counties are likely to qualify due to excess moisture.

Livestock producers in southwestern counties report that they are already grazing fall pastures after culling herds and selling replacements. The southwestern North Dakota drought represents a very serious threat to the survival of ranch operations in that region. Consequently, I urge the Farm Service Agency to take the following actions:

- Expedite approval of haying and grazing requests;
- Allow immediate grazing in advance of the normal July 15 starting date; and
- Allocate Emergency Conservation Program funding to drought counties for the purpose of providing emergency water for livestock.

Your prompt attention to this request would be most appreciated. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



KENT CONRAD
United States Senate

KC:wss

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3403

June 17, 2004

Ross J. Davidson, Jr.
Administrator
Risk Management Agency
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Mr. Davidson:

As you may know, divergent weather conditions are currently causing extreme hardship for producers in major parts of North Dakota. Weather patterns have conspired to cause severe drought in the southwestern part of the state, while excess moisture has resulted in a significant problem with prevented planting in northern regions of North Dakota.

As you know, to qualify for emergency haying and grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage, a county must demonstrate moisture totals of at least 40% below or above normal precipitation. Sadly, we have numerous counties suffering each extreme.

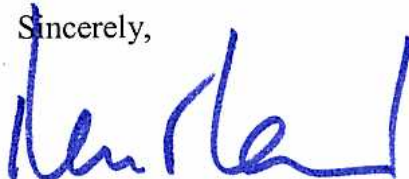
As a result, livestock producers in each region will struggle to find adequate grazing or accumulate necessary hay for the winter months. CRP acres are unlikely to fill this void. In southwestern counties, CRP acres are drying up rapidly, thus reducing forage quality and quantity. In northern regions, many CRP contracts were enrolled for wetland restoration purposes and are consequently too wet to hay even if the prohibition against haying wetland acres was waived.

Much of the cropland in northern counties was tilled and fertilized prior to the continual rains that eventually stopped planting progress. Although producers are aware that they can hay or graze a cover crop with a 65% reduction in insurance indemnity, the cost of doing so would be prohibitive. In addition, abandoning the prevented planting acres may result in erosion or leaching of applied nitrogen into the groundwater.

After reviewing the situation faced by our livestock producers, I request that you allow a variance to the crop insurance prevented planting regulations to allow for haying and grazing of cover crops without the corresponding reduction of insurance indemnity. This variance could be limited only to counties that qualify for haying and grazing of CRP due to reduced or excessive moisture conditions.

Please give this recommendation your immediate consideration. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kent Conrad", with a stylized, cursive script.

KENT CONRAD
United States Senate

KC:wss